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## COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK APRIL 10-16 Honoring County Heroes

### ***MONTANA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS GO TO WASHINGTON DC for NACo***

*by MACo President Bill Kennedy*

Fourteen Montana county commissioners attended the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. The major topics of discussion were cuts in the President's budget to critical county programs. Our delegation sported NACo buttons saying, "Save CDBG Grants and Restore This Funding Back to States and Counties". We all understand that these grants have helped rural counties for many years.

MACo President Bill Kennedy attended the Health Steering Committee meetings with the discussion centering on Medicare and intergovernmental transfers for rural counties and states. MACo 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President Doug Kaercher attended the Health & Human Services discussion on reauthorization of the TANF program. MACo 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President John Prinkki initiated a resolution on railroad transportation and with the help of Commissioners Kathy Bessette, Peggy Beltrone and Jamie Doggett, the resolution was adopted by the NACo Board. Commissioner Carol Brooker worked on reauthorization

of the Workforce Investment Act, as did Sue Mohr, Montana Job Training Partnership.

Commissioner Gary Fjelstad and Yellowstone County Sheriff Chuck Maxwell attended the Justice and Public Safety Committee meeting. Commissioner Art Kleinjan represented the Oil, Gas and Coal counties on the Energy Steering Committee. Commissioners Alan Thompson and Allan Underdal represented Montana counties in the Public Lands and Intergovernmental Affairs Committees. NACo WIR President Connie Eissinger, along with Commissioner Mike Murray, brought up issues on public lands at the WIR Board meeting. (Congratulations to Connie as WIR President for all her hard work in keeping Montana represented.) Lewis & Clark County Commissioner Anita Varone represented us at the Housing & Economic Steering Committee meetings.

On Tuesday morning, the commissioners had breakfast with Montana congressmen, US Senator

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Max Baucus, US Representative Dennis Rehberg and representatives from Senator Conrad Burns' office. The group expressed concerns for the CDBG program and reauthorization of the National Highway Bill. Senator Baucus is taking the key role with the highway bill. Representative Rehberg told us of his new position on the House Appropriations Committee. I would like to thank our congressional delegation for meeting with the commissioners throughout the week.

I would also like to thank all of the commissioners for taking their time to go to Washington, DC to represent us.



L - R: Allan Underdal, Toole County; Jamie Doggett, Meagher County; Alan Thompson, Ravalli County; John Prinkki, Carbon County; Carol Brooker, Sanders County; Mike Murray, Lewis & Clark County; US Senator Max Baucus; Connie Eissinger, McCone County; Doug Kaercher, Hill County; Kathy Bessette, Hill County; Art Kleinjan, Blaine County; US Representative Dennis Rehberg; Anita Varone, Lewis & Clark County; Peggy Beltrone, Cascade County; Bill Kennedy, Yellowstone County

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**April 6** MACo Board of Directors; MACo; noon  
**April 7** JPA Trustee Meeting  
**April 8** JPIA Trustee Meeting-Renewals  
**April 10-16** COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK  
**April 23** Last day of legislative session  
**April 27** MACo Tax, Finance Budget Committee; 10:00

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 2** Districts 10, 11 Polson  
**May 4** Districts 8, 9, 12 Helena  
**May 6** Myra Shults' Roundtable; MACo Conference Room  
**May 11** Districts 1, 2, 3 Forsyth or Miles City  
**May 12** Districts 6, 7 Harlowton  
**May 13** Districts 4, 5 Fort Benton  
**May 15-18** County Coroners Convention; Whitefish  
**May 25-27** WIR Conference; Tacoma WA

**June 14-17** MSPOA Convention; Bozeman  
**June 10** MACo Board of Directors; MACo; 10:00 am  
**June 17** JPA / JPIA Defense Counsel Retreat  
**June 20-23** District Court Clerk Convention; Scobey

## BLM seeks nominations to Resource Advisory Councils

Western Montana: two openings for elected officials, state agency and public-at-large  
 Central Montana: two openings for elected officials, state agency and public-at-large  
 Eastern Montana: two openings for elected officials, state agency and public-at-large  
 Nominations are due to the appropriate BLM field manager by April 19. Nominations should include background information and letters of references. Current terms expire in September.

## IN MEMORIAM

### JOANN HUFFSMITH Granite County Commissioner 2001-2005

During her battle with cancer, Joann kept the county health system as her major goal. She was a primary supporter of the county hospital and nursing home. She is survived by husband, Richard, and her daughter and family.

## IN MEMORIAM

### MALCOLM JOHN McCRAE Rosebud County Commissioner 1977-1987

Mac combined his gifts for business (his hardware store), for conversation, and his wealth of knowledge from ranching in his service to Rosebud County. He is survived by his wife, Pat, four children and eight grandchildren.

## MACo BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Selections from Minutes of February 16, 2005 Meeting

**Budget Report:** Bill Nyby, MACo Fiscal Officer, reported on the status of MACo's budget through January 2005. Revenue collections are at 72% of anticipated while expenditures are at 53% of what was budgeted. Nyby noted that revenue from conferences was up, interest revenue was down and member expense was over budget. President Kennedy asked that the Committee chairs estimate their expenditure requests for FY 06 and provide justification. He also requested that expenses for each committee be reported. Health insurance appeared to be over expended, which might be driven the reporting the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the prior year (FY 04) in the current year. Fiscal Officer Nyby also requested that the Board provide direction to the Budget Committee in budgeting for a retirement in FY 06.

**Legislative Report:** Gordon Morris, MACo Executive Director, and Harold Blattie, MACo Assistant Director, provided briefs on significant legislation. The Local Option Tax bill (SB 184) and the appropriations for county attorney salaries at a true 50% were discussed. A status sheet of MACo bills and selected sections from the Public Defender bill (SB 146) were given. The Sheriffs and Peace Officers were seeking to add detention officers to the Sheriffs' Retirement System. The Executive Committee has recommended MACo not take a position on the bill.

**Executive Session:** Discussion centered around the actions needed to be taken toward Executive Director retirement

#### **Other Business:**

President Kennedy noted that the Association would be recruiting for an Executive Director through an open promotion. A committee of 8 board members, chaired by 1<sup>st</sup> VP Kaercher has been appointed to review the job descriptions and make recommendations to the Board at a meeting to be scheduled in late April or May.

Board member Davey thanked the Executive Committee, Board members and the counties in general for supporting the resolution requesting the Governor to take steps necessary to protect the health and safety of Montana cattle herds from BSE.

President Kennedy reported to the Board that Executive Committee members have been very active in this first half of the session. He specifically thanked Doug Kaercher and John Prinkki. Kennedy closed by noting how important it is in terms of telling "our story" to have commissioners present. President Kennedy closed by thanking Gordon and Harold for doing an excellent job.

Board member Schulz noted that Representative Barrett is not going to attempt to get HB 133 off the table in Local Government. The Bill had become a political football absent of common sense. Madison County accepts that decision and recommends letting it go.

### SPRING DISTRICT MEETINGS

<b>DISTRICTS 1, 2, 3</b>	<b>May 11</b>	<b>Miles City or Forsyth</b>
<b>DISTRICTS 4, 5</b>	<b>May 13</b>	<b>Fort Benton</b>
<b>DISTRICTS 6, 7</b>	<b>May 12</b>	<b>Harlowton</b>
<b>DISTRICTS 8, 9, 12</b>	<b>May 4</b>	<b>Helena</b>
<b>DISTRICTS 10, 11</b>	<b>May 2</b>	<b>Polson</b>

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## **New Temporary Vehicle Registrations Hit the Road**

A new motor vehicle temporary registration permit (TRP) process is being tested by automobile dealers. Starting March 14, the testing process began at Taylor's Automax in Great Falls, Archie Cochrane Motors, Inc., in Billings, and Placer Motors, Grimes Buick GMC, Inc., and Kev's Auto Sales in Helena. By next year, someone who buys a car from a private party will be able to go online, get a temporary permit and print it, even on the weekend or after-hours.

The temporary registration permit (TRP), generated online, can be printed out on regular paper, which has two parts. The larger section is inserted into a weatherproof, plastic sleeve, which is then attached in the rear license plate holder (rather than being taped to the rear window). The remaining section—the vehicle registration—can be slipped into the glove box for safekeeping.

The temporary registration permit service is supported by the Montana Department of Justice, the Montana Department of Administration Information Services Division and Montana Interactive, a subsidiary of NIC.

NIC manages more e-Government services than any provider in the world. NIC provides e-Government solutions for 1,500 state and local agencies that serve more than 51 million people. Additional information on their e-government services is available at

[www.nicusa.com](http://www.nicusa.com)

## **LOCAL FIRE PROTECTION MONEY AVAILABLE**

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) announced today that applications for the 2005 VFA/RFA Grant Program are now being accepted. Applications for matching funds through the federally funded, Title II & IV, Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program (U.S. Forest Service) and the Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program (U.S. Department of Interior agencies - Bureau of Land Management, Fish & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs) are due April 25, 2005. The cost share money is being made available to defray up to ninety-percent of the cost of improving local fire protection.

According to Michael Wiederhold, Rural Fire Program Coordinator with DNRC's Forestry Division, single applications representing county-wide fire organizations are required. Eligible applicants to be included are: fire departments, rural fire districts, fire service areas, volunteer fire companies or other fire service organizations in communities with populations of 10,000 or less. The maximum grant amount for a single applicant is \$20,000. The single applications for a group of communities, i.e., countywide fire councils, countywide fire departments, etc., may have a total population of over 10,000.

The funding for the year 2005 VFA and RFA program is anticipated to be approximately \$1,000,000 and applications can be submitted for projects such as department or district organization and planning, fire prevention, fire training and fire equipment.

In 2004, this grant program received 74 applications requesting \$2.2 million dollars in funding. Seventy-four grants were awarded, totaling the \$1.2 million received from the Forest Service and Interior agencies. Construction or improvement of fire stations for housing fire equipment, normal operational expenses and maintenance do not qualify for VFA/RFA funds. Details are available by contacting your local DNRC office, by calling (406) 542-4206, or on the Internet at:

[http://dnrc.state.mt.us/forestry/dnrcfiresite/RFD\\_Assistance/IndexRFD.aspx](http://dnrc.state.mt.us/forestry/dnrcfiresite/RFD_Assistance/IndexRFD.aspx)

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# RURAL HOSPITAL ERGONOMICS

By Emelia McEwen, MACo Assistant Risk Manager

Hospitals and other medical institutions that provide nursing care are at particularly high risk for injury and loss rates from back injuries. Whether they are repetitive stress injuries (RSIs) from patient lifting and handling or the result of a single traumatic incident, such as a fall or breaking a patient's fall, a back injury can cost \$100,000 or more.

In many instances, a health-care worker who has suffered back trauma from patient handling cannot return to full duty without strict limitations. Some never return at all and claim permanent disability. Back injuries are the most compensated injuries in the country and account for thousands of claims each year.

The Howard Memorial Hospital (HMH) in Willits, California, provides services and 25 beds to a rural community. In the last three years, the hospital provided an excellent worker safety and ergonomics program that reduced loss rates from \$377,000 to \$12,800.

The program stressed adherence to a safety program as a long-term benefit to their health, and as a means to make their workplace, the hospital, a safer place to work.

The Hospital always had an active safety committee with a flexible budget for providing abatements and repairing or removing any safety hazards. However, the main problem was controlling how workers physically interacted with their environment on a day-to-day basis. Performing a heavy patient lift single-handedly could easily happen if a worker was in a rush and no help was immediately available. The usual RSIs tended to crop up among office workers if correct posture and safe equipment use was not reinforced.

In addition to having a proactive in-house safety committee, HMH liked the idea of bringing an objective third party to provide ergonomics training. The contractor provided an extensive walk-through in all areas to identify ergonomic risk factors and work tasks that presented a high injury potential. Patient lifting was targeted as a high-risk area, and the hospital was advised to purchase mechanical lifts to assist the staff with

patient transfers.

The mechanical lifts cost around \$1,500 to \$3,500 per machine, but that was nothing compared to one \$100,000 claim for a back injury. Workers were trained in the proper use of the lifts and each worker attended "back safe" training to learn, practice and reinforce safe lifting techniques.

Administrative staff attended the training because employees that see the administrative staff attending the training understand that everyone is in this together.

The office staff had a separate "Sit Safe" and office ergonomics training. Employees were encouraged to team up and evaluate each others' workstations on a regular basis and to keep a sharp eye out for risky behaviors or postures.

The average cost was around \$50,000 per worker and \$50,000 for assistive equipment and mechanical patient lifts. Follow-up training is annual and the cost is around \$30 per worker.

As costs and injury rates decreased, the hospital experienced growth in many areas:

The number of employees increased.

Employee turnover decreased.

Employees expressed satisfaction with the work and the workplace.

HMH plans to share the success story with other hospitals to encourage them to implement effective ergonomics training programs and to encourage them not to fear the initial setup costs.

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## COUNTIES SEEK PERSONNEL

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**DAWSON COUNTY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

CONTACT DAWSON COUNTY COMMISSION  
FOR INFORMATION CALL 406-377-3562

## FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING DIRECTOR

Minimum requirement is a Bachelor's Degree in county and/or city planning with a 5 years of professional experience, with 3 of those years in a supervisory capacity. This is a contract position, salary DOE.

## FLATHEAD COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES COORDINATOR

This position requires knowledge of operating an emergency communications system, management practices and budgetary procedures. A bachelor's degree in public administration, public safety, communications or closely related field is desired.

For more information on either position visit:

[www.co.flathead.mt.us](http://www.co.flathead.mt.us)

Submit letter of interest, resume, and completed Flathead County employment application, references and salary history to:

**Flathead Job Service Workforce Center**  
427 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue East  
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Deadline: 5:00 p.m. April 13, 2005**

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## COUNTY PHOTO ID CARDS



FRONT

THIS CARD IS COUNTY PROPERTY.

If found, please return to the address on the front of the card.

Authorized Signature

BACK

County Identification Cards are being produced by the MACo office. Seven counties have received ID cards for county employees who may need to present identification for various uses such as receiving government rates for lodging.

When a county requests, a digital camera is sent for photos of county employees, along with information forms for each person. When the forms and photos arrive back at MACo, Oline Barta produces the ID cards. The cards feature the MACo logo, the county logo or a photo of the county courthouse, photo of the employee and a watermark of the State Seal.

## MCA Guidebook for Contracting

A guidebook on the various methods of contracting for construction services has been published by the Associated General Contractors of America. The thorough research and reviews by professional architects, engineers and project owner groups make it a comprehensive and easily-read book.

The book explains the various methods of securing a construction project. The traditional "low-bid" method involves hiring a design professional to develop construction plans, which are used to secure bids from competing contractors. The "design-build" method entails contracting with a single firm for the design and construction of a project, with the design-build contractor chosen on the basis of both qualifications and price. Methods for hiring a "construction manager" have several variations offered.

Each method has pros and cons. The book is designed to assist in choosing an appropriate system for each situation. The book is available through MACo or from the Montana Contractors Association in Helena at 442-4162.

# COUNTY NEWS

## COUNTY OFFICIALS

### **ANACONDA-DEER LODGE**

**COUNTY** appointed former Commissioner Russ Bilodeau to the Commission seat vacated by the late Paul Beausoleil.

## COMMISSION MEETINGS

**YELLOWSTONE COUNTY** conducted a recent commission meeting with long-distance video-conferencing. Chair John Ostlund was on-site in the Commission meeting room with the attending public. Bill Kennedy and Jim Reno participated from Helena through the video connection.

## HEALTH

**RAVALLI COUNTY** public health nurse closed the motor vehicle and tax departments for a Thursday and Friday because of a recent influenza outbreak. In addition the health office provided a no-cost immunization clinic for courthouse employees.

**POWDER RIVER COUNTY** Board of Health discussed status of a recent chemical spill, proposed regulations on body piercing and tattoos, problems of sick deer in town and horse vaccinations for West Nile disease.

## COUNTY FACILITIES

**BEAVERHEAD COUNTY** negotiated a state land transfer to allow the county to take ownership of a Montana National Guard armory. The armory will become a bus barn for the schools.

**BROADWATER COUNTY** received a \$1 million gift endowment from a charitable trust. The gift will be used for the county medical health facility.

**CARBON COUNTY** has remodeled its second-floor courtroom, replacing seats, reconfiguring the jury area and constructing a witness room on the first floor.

**CHOUTEAU COUNTY** attorney moved to courthouse offices, leaving a long-time location in a house across the street from the courthouse. In addition, the district judge office was moved in with the clerk of court. Commissioner Ken Evans used a backhoe to move the many law books, which are now housed in a new secure storage unit.

**DANIELS COUNTY** response to Montana Advocacy Program survey for disability access is attempting to balance that with requirements to maintain the original design of the courthouse, which is a national historic site. They have considered shutting down the courtrooms on the second floor, holding small court proceedings in the commissioners room and holding major trials off-premises.

**DAWSON COUNTY** made room for office space and document storage by removing jail cells from the old county courthouse jail. During the remodeling, lead-base paint posed a health threat, so the county hired an environmental firm to do the work.

**FLATHEAD COUNTY** considered a proposal to sell two buildings flanking the county court house to Montana Department of Transportation and use the funds to construct a new office building. The county courthouse currently sits in the center of Highway 93, which is slated for widening and straightening.

**GALLATIN COUNTY** acted 1) to approve building a 32-bed halfway house for nonviolent offenders and parolees; 2) to pledge \$1 million through the state loan program to develop a mental health facility next to the hospital and 3) to accept a \$2.7 million offer for county property which was to be used for a new jail, but the bond levy failed.

**GLACIER COUNTY** has begun construction of the new nursing home, passed by voters in November.

**GRANITE COUNTY** citizens turned out in force to protest closure of the local hospital which has been failing financially.

**HILL COUNTY** worked on three projects: 1) a lawsuit against a contractor for problems on reconstruction of courthouse steps; 2) a donation to use as match for FAA grants; and 3) a lease for new space in a shopping center for the local museum.

**LEWIS and CLARK COUNTY** participated in a partnership to install solar panels on the senior citizens building in Augusta.

**PRAIRIE COUNTY** Museum became county property, was absorbed into the county insurance policy and the county pays utilities on the building and gallery.

**RICHLAND COUNTY** rennovated the courthouse dome, which was a two-year project, and shifted offices to use an opening when the county extension agents moved to another building.

**ROOSEVELT COUNTY** has a new county multi-purpose building paid for with CDBG funds.

# **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) IN THE RURAL WEST**

by Kevin Hopkins, Editor, Government West, March/April 2004

Sometimes we have the impression that the use of GIS data is restricted to state houses and the major metropolitan areas. However, Interest in GIS is just as high in the rural West, with the vast majority of rural counties deeply involved in using GIS technologies.

According to a 12-state study by Utah State University's Western Rural Development Center (WRDC), 85% of surveyed counties with populations of less than 50,000 were using some form of GIS system. Of the remaining counties, 54% currently had plans to develop GIS capabilities, and almost all were interested in doing so.

## **USES AND BENEFITS**

The WRDC survey revealed that rural counties use GIS technologies in a variety of ways. For instance:

- 60% use GIS to maintain land ownership records, and 57% use it to maintain tax parcel information.
- 53% employ GIS for road planning and maintenance.
- 49% use GIS to track changes in municipal and political boundaries, and an equivalent percentage use it for comprehensive planning activities.
- 44% rely on GIS for help in developing zoning ordinances.
- 23% use GIS for natural resource management, and 18% do so for parks and recreation management.

62% of counties responding to the survey agreed that GIS is currently a valuable resource for most county governments. 96% agreed that it would become a valuable resource in the future. Of the specific benefits produced, 81% cited improvements in the ability to make decisions, 76% listed enhancements in record-locating abilities, and 69% cited increases in productivity.

## **CHALLENGES FOR RURAL COUNTIES**

The WRDC study did identify several concerns. For example, more than four out of five counties identified the cost of acquiring computer hardware and software, the cost of training employees on a GIS system, and the cost of digitizing county records as significant barriers to the implementation of GIS capabilities. And almost four out of five of the responding counties viewed their state's support as "low or non-existent" for hiring or staffing GIS work in the counties.

Even in counties where there are active GIS programs, more work remains to be done. The study noted, for instance, that "although a large percentage of rural western counties identified land use planning as a priority, only one-third of the counties maintain data on land use."

The promise for the use of GIS in the rural West is strong. However, "The challenge for rural counties will be to find sufficient resources to acquire additional data and to train personnel to make use of GIS capabilities."

## **MACo JPIA**

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## **37th GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON AGING**

**MAY 17--MAY 19**

**Colonial Red Lion Motel in Helena**

1. Medicare changes and its future
2. Social Security
3. The White House Conference on Aging
4. Care-giving
5. Employment opportunities
6. Legislative updates
7. Adult Protective Services



# LOCAL CONTROL

**Time to step Up or Get Stepped On**  
by Jim Lewis, "County" Volume 16, No. 6

When it comes up, people nod without much thought about the notion that local governments are more responsive than the state or federal levels. To many, it is a self-evident truth that home-grown decisions are inherently more likely to succeed than something decided hundreds of miles away. It just makes sense: local decision-makers are on the scene, staring the issues straight in the face. It is reassuring when citizens see their county officials at church or the supermarket, while members of Congress and the Legislature go off for long periods of time to the capital cities, where they live among the lobbyists and interest groups.

But there's no question the real power in a federal-state-local system of government starts at the top, where it is presumed that the smartest, best-educated and best-paid people are best-suited to decide what's best for all of us. Even though the concept of local control is usually traced back to Thomas Jefferson, who is frequently quoted as saying, "the government closest to the people serves the people best," the reality is that the struggle over who is really in charge was settled at the beginnings of the Republic: Washington DC writes the big rules, the states determine governance within their boundaries and the local governments, well, they get their hands dirty with the day-to-day chores.

Beginning in 1981, the tide of service delivery began to shift. In his first State of the Union address, President Ronald Reagan promised that "after 50 years of taking power away from the hands of the people in their states and local communities, we have started returning power and resources to them." About ten years ago, the momentum in that direction picked up more steam when then-US House Majority Leader Newt Gingrich announced that "devolution"--devolving federal jobs to the state and local levels--would be the new way to get things done.

The concept of increasing local control is running smack-dab into an ever-increasing resistance to taxes, especially local property taxes

But devolution has become a selective transfer of authority. The federal leaders, who promise more local decision-making, also pass measures that prohibit local or state initiatives, such as preventing local option taxes, sales taxes on Internet transactions, local regulation of cell phone towers or use fees for automated teller machines. Many interest groups for these areas have found it easier to be regulated at the federal or state level than dealing with hundreds of local governments.

Devolution generally has meant giving the counties the responsibility but no funding. Counties have to fight very hard to keep any federal appropriations in the federal budget. Some federal grant programs last for three years or so and then the counties are left holding the bag.

Studies of the flow of dollars out of Washington (with the amount of money distributed compared with the increased responsibilities) indicate that 1979 was the peak of the federal government's largesse.

While the Reagan administration proposed reducing the size of government, that did not happen. Instead, it shifted responsibilities. In terms of the size of the federal government, the number of people really hasn't changed much since the 1950's. But the increase in mandates to state and local government in recent decades has. Local governments were assigned with developing regional solutions for services such as transportation, solid waste disposal and/or providing accessible public services

to the disabled.

Now, however, the concept of increasing local control is running smack-dab into a contrasting development, an ever-increasing resistance to taxes, especially local property taxes.

Coinciding with the onset of the devolution movement in the early 1990's was the revving up of the anti-tax rebellion that began in 1978, when California adopted caps on property taxes. The

continued on next page

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tax revolt really took off in 1992 when the State of Colorado passed the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR).

TABOR provides that in any given year, state and local government revenue can exceed the previous year's revenue only by an amount proportional to population growth and inflation, and spending can never go up by more than 6%. Any surplus beyond that must be returned to the taxpayers. At present, similar tax limitations are being discussed by state legislatures in Minnesota, Idaho, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Maryland, Virginia, Maine, Kansas and Texas.

The original proposal in Colorado was the idea of an apartment owner upset with property taxes. Ironically, this man is expected to win a county commissioner seat, promising to sell off the county's rodeo arena and performing arts center, reduce the salaries of county administration and end financial subsidies to the county fair and the senior citizens' center.

In Texas, the proposal is to set an annual cap on revenues for all local government entities, allowing for increases limited by inflation and population growth, with future increases approved by voters. The plan would place a 3% cap on annual appraised value increases for residences.

So we have the "starve the beast" approach (cutting revenues), devolution (shifting responsibilities down to local levels), and TABOR (limiting flexibility for local government).

Dr. Beverly Cigler, Pennsylvania State University (considered a leading academic authority on county government throughout the country), sees the struggle between state-level tax limitations and local control of service delivery as a fundamental matter. "Different levels of government used to have specific roles. Now we have a broader set--which level of government should be doing what, based on differing capabilities of different tax sources?"

Into the mix comes the realization by counties that state legislatures and state departments require constant education about the value of the services delivered. Often times, legislators tend to be more conservative, tend to distrust government and think they're elected to dismantle or undermine government. Local officials should be partners in the business of addressing problems, instead of just another interest group.

## **FLORIDA CONTINUES SEARCH FOR NEW GOVERNMENT REVENUE**

Florida's Legislature is flush with good ideas. One proposal involves a 2¢-per-roll tax on toilet paper to pay for wastewater treatment and to help rural areas and small towns upgrade their sewer systems. The lawmaker's pay-as-you-go bill has been the source of much bathroom humor, but the issue is a serious one, especially in some of the fast-growing counties.

The Republican-dominated Florida Legislature, however, doesn't like new taxes, and the idea is likely to quickly end up in the tank.

Senate President Tom Lee said he didn't think it would get too far, but didn't rule it out. "We'll be getting to the bottom of it real soon," he said.

The House is skeptical as well. "We're not wild about tax increases," said House Speaker Allan Bense. "But we'll certainly let it go through the system."

If it were to pass, the extra two pennies could generate \$50 million a year.

Governor Jeb Bush, who would give final approval, said that if toilet paper is taxed, people might use less of it. "That's not necessarily a good thing," noted the Governor.

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY LEVIES ACRONYM FINES**

Feeling the use of acronyms has gotten out of control, Kitsap County commissioners have begun an attempt to stamp them out by fining offenders a dollar each time they use one during a meeting.

Each month the money collected from the unfortunate use of initials or shortcut words goes to charity. In January more than \$100 went to aid the tsunami victims. In February the fund went to a local veteran's charity.

In unexpected attention to this war on words, Canadian radio stations have broadcast the story, giving the effort international status.

So if you are in Washington discussing CDBG, or even your IOU, you might be digging into your pocket to pay for your gaffes ASAP.



# NACo INFORMATION



## FEDERAL UNFUNDED MANDATES

The Unfunded Mandates Reform Act passed the US Congress in 1995. Virginia Representative Tom Davis, Chair of the Committee on Government Reform, plans to amend the law to provide more protections for state and local governments.

NACo President Angelo Kyle calls for the federal government to provide information on the costs of mandates, both when they are first proposed and after they have taken effect. He hopes this will focus members of Congress on the burden they are imposing on state and local governments.

NACo recently conducted a rapid response survey. Sixty counties responded. Those statistics demonstrated that federal mandated costs from six programs averaged \$137 per capita. Projected across the entire US population, NACo suggested that the burden would be approximately \$40 billion.

Fairfax County, Virginia, reports that it provided 5% of its burden for unfunded mandates from both federal and state levels. Based on this example, if the same were true for all counties, the unfunded mandate costs could total as much as \$800 billion.

Some of the federal mandates came from:

- Clean Air Act
- Clean Water Act
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Help America Vote Act (HAVA)
- Endangered Species Act
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Uncompensated Health Care
- Incarceration of Criminal Illegal Aliens

## NACo NEW PUBLICATIONS

### **SURVEYS:**

- 2004 County Services and Operations
- Wages and the Cost of Housing
- Homeland Security Funding

### **RESEARCH:**

- Ethics for County Officials
- Dillon's Rule (Limiting Government)
- Electronic Messaging--E-mail Privacy
- Employees and the Internet
- Debt Management for Counties
- Alphabet Soup (Gov't. Acronyms)
- Run a Meeting (pocket size)
- Funding County Services
- Media Relations Guide

### **MODEL PROGRAMS / BEST PRACTICES**

- Rural Programs
- Financial Management /Tight Budgets
- Civics and Public Education
- Community & Economic Development

### **BRIEFS**

- Indigent Defense
- Sovereign Immunity
- Writing a Request for Proposal
- Finding a Federal Grant
- Economic Development Handbook
- Financing Economic Development
- Performance Measurement in County Management
- State Prisoners and County Jails



The National Association of Counties (NACo), in partnership with Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS) and state associations of counties, provides county employees with a Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program.

Since its inception in 1980, NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement income program available to county employees. NACo's Program assets exceed \$6.0 billion.

## U. S. CENSUS BUREAU AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The US Bureau of Census is modernizing the approach to the 10-year census. The traditional decennial census has had two parts: 1) the short form, which counts the population and 2) the long form, which collects demographic, housing, social and economic information. Information from the long form is used for administration of federal programs and the distribution of billions of federal dollars to states and counties.

The **American Community Survey** is replacing the long form in future censuses. The next ten-year census will return to its original purpose of counting the population and will use the short form only.

The **American Community Survey** is an on-going process, which uses a current version of the long form to update information every year. It will not count the population, but will provide numbers that reflect what the population looks like and how it lives.

The US Census Bureau selects a random sample from housing unit addresses. Any one address has one chance in 480 to be selected in any month. No address will be selected more of-

ten than once every five years. Because it is part of the census, responding to the **American Community Survey is required by law.**

The process includes a pre-notice letter, followed by the questionnaire, which is to be mailed back to the Census Bureau. Reminders for non-responses are sent at 3 weeks and six weeks, then followed up with telephone calls and finally a personal visit.

The federal law not only requires a response, but it also guarantees confidentiality for the responses. Severe penalties are imposed on Census Bureau employees who reveal individual data.

The **American Community Survey** questionnaire covers subjects such as age, family relationships, grandparents responsible for grandchildren, place of birth, citizenship. languages, disabilities, income, travel distances to work, housing costs, housing values and size of housing.

The **American Community Survey** and the information it provides can be found at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

### MACo NEWS

Phone (406) 444-4380

Fax (406) 442-5238

Email: [macopb@maco.cog.mt.us](mailto:macopb@maco.cog.mt.us)

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